

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 111223Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 565

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 1792

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR EG IS US

SUBJECT: RABIN KNESSET STATEMENT REGARDING US ARMS SALES TO EGYPT

1. FOLLOWING IS OFFICIAL GOI TEXT OF STATEMENT BY PRIME
MINISTER RABIN TO THE KNESSET ON MARCH 10 REGARDING US
ARMS SALES TO EGYPT.

2. BEGIN TEXT: IN MY REMARKS, I SHALL CONCENTRATE ON
THE ISSUE ITSELF, AND NOT ON FURTHER SUBJECTS ADDED BY
THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE KNESSET WHO RAISED THE
ISSUE HERE TODAY. I SHALL PRESENT THE COURSE OF THE
CONTACTS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND THE
ISRAEL GOVERNMENT ON THE SUBJECT OF ARMS SUPPLIES, AND
I SHOULD LIKE TO STATE PRECISELY WHAT ISRAEL'S POSITION
IS AND WHAT ISRAELI ACTIVITY WILL CONSIST OF.

3. THE FIRST TIME WE WERE INFORMED OF THE INTENTION--
THE CONCRETE INTENTION--OF THE US GOVERNMENT OT SUPPLY
MEANS OF WARFARE AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO EGYPT,
WAS IN MY MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE DURING
MY VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES. I MET WITH HIM ON
FEBRUARY 3 IN LOS ANGELES, AND IN THAT MEETING HE
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INFORMED ME OF THE INTENTION OF THE US GOVERNMENT

TO SELL SIX C-130 TRANSPORT PLANES TO EGYPT. THESE PLANES HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN INTENDED FOR LIBYA. ON THE SPOT, I MADE IT CLEAR THAT ISRAEL'S POSITION WAS UNEQUIVOCAL: ISRAEL OPPOSES THE SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND ARMS TO EGYPT--THE ISSUE NOT BEING THE VALUE OF THE SIX TRANSPORT PLANES, BUT THE FACT THAT THIS CONSTITUTES A PRECEDENT AND AN OPENING FOR ARMS DEALS BETWEEN THE US AND EGYPT. ON THIS BASIS, AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE OF PRINCIPLE, ISRAEL IS OPPOSED TO THIS DEAL. I REPORTED ON THIS TO THE CABINET AND TO THE DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.

4. ON MARCH 1, THE UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE CALLED IN ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, AND INFORMED HIM OF THE INTENTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION WITH REFERENCE TO CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT THAT MIGHT BE GIVEN TO EGYPT. THE AMBASSADOR REACTED ON THE SPOT. HE RECALLED MY REACTION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, THE GOVERNMENT'S OPPOSITION IN PRINCIPLE TO THE SUPPLY OF ANY MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND ARMS BY THE UNITED STATES TO EGYPT.

5. UPON RECEIPT OF THE REPORT OF THIS MEETING, I INSTRUCTED THE AMBASSADOR TO REQUEST AN URGENT MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE, TO APPRISE HIM OF THE GRAVITY WITH WHICH ISRAEL REGARDS THIS AMERICAN STEP. THE MEETING TOOK PLACE ON MARCH 5. AT ITS SESSION, THE CABINET APPROVED THE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN THE AMBASSADOR, AS TO HIS ACTION ON THIS SUBJECT IN HIS CONTACTS WITH THE ADMINISTRATION AND IN PRESENTING ISRAEL'S POSITION IN ANY FORUM WHATSOEVER.

6. THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL HAS ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS CLARIFIED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES THAT IT HAS NO OBJECTION TO THE FOSTERING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ARAB COUNTRIES--ON TWO CONDITIONS: THAT THIS IS NOT DONE AT ISRAEL'S EXPENSE, AND THAT IT NOT ENGANGER ISRAEL. NAMELY, TO REFRAIN FROM SUPPLYING MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND ARMS AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNCLASSIFIED

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UNITED STATES AND THE ARAB COUNTRIES. THERE ARE MANY SPHERES IN WHICH THE ARAB STATES ARE NEEDY, AND WOULD THAT THEY WOULD FIND THE TIME TO DEAL WITH THEM, INSTEAD OF FOSTERING A WAR POLICY AND (BUILDING UP) MEANS OF WAR.

7. ISRAEL'S OPPOSITION IS PRINCIPLE IS BASED ON A SIMPLE ASSUMPTION: THAT ANY ADDITION OF MILITARY

EQUIPMENT TO ANY ARAB COUNTRY, AND CERTAINLY TO THE PRIMARY COUNTRY AMONG THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES AGAINST ISRAEL, IS IN THE NATURE OF A THREAT TO ISRAEL. ANY ADDITION OF MEANS INCREASES MILITARY CAPABILITY, AND IT IS THE DUTY OF THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT TO OPPOSE THIS.

8. THE SECOND REASON IS THAT AMERICAN MEANS OF WARFARE WOULD BE ADDED TO THE SOVIET TECHNOLOGY AND MEANS OF WARFARE PRESENTLY IN EGYPT'S POSSESSION. AND I ADMIT: WE HAD AN ADVANTAGE, BECAUSE IN MANY ARMAMENTS SPHERES, AMERICAN WEAPONRY HAS ADVANTAGES OVER SOVIET WEAPONRY, AND THROUGH THE START OF MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONS, EGYPT WILL ENJOY THE ADVANTAGES OF BOTH SOVIET AND AMERICAN WEAPONS.

9. THE THIRD REASON: THE UNITED STATES HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SLOWING DOWN AND BALANCING THE ARMS RACE IN THE REGION. THE UNITED STATES HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN ITS DECLARED POLICY AND IN ITS DEEDS, WHICH BALANCED THE SUPPLY OF SOVIET ARMS TO THE ARAB COUNTRIES BY THE SUPPLY OF AMERICAN ARMS TO ISRAEL.

10. WE ARE NOT IN THE HABIT OF PUBLISHING DATA ON THE IDF'S ARMAMENTS. BUT THE IDF IS WELL-ARMED AND LET US NOT CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE LEADING TO A DIMINUTION OF THE CONCEPTS OF OUR ENEMIES AND OF OUR PUBLIC (REGARDING OUR STRENGTH), WHEN THIS IS NOT THE REALITY. THE STATE OF ISRAEL IS MILITARILY STRONG, AND IS CAPABLE OF CONDUCTING POLICY ON THE BASIS OF THAT PRESUPPOSITION.

11. IN ANY CASE, THE UNITED STATES, THROUGH SUPPLYING AMERICAN ARMS TO EGYPT, IS IN FACT TO A CERTAIN EXTENT BEING TRANSFORMED FROM A FACTOR BALANCING THE ARMS RACE INTO ONE

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ACCELERATING THE ARMS RACE.

12. AND IN ITS IMPLICATIONS AND IN OUR EXPLANATIONS TO THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC, THIS IS THE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL AND MILITARY PROBLEM. IF UNTIL THIS DAY THE UNITED STATES WAS ABLE TO SAY: WE HAVE ADOPTED A POLICY WHOSE AIM IS THE SLOWING-DOWN OF THE ARMS RACE AND WHEN THE SOVIET UNION DID NOT RESPOND AND SENT MASSIVE QUANTITIES OF ARMS TO THE ARAB STATES, WE BALANCED THIS BY THE SUPPLY OF ARMS, IN MANY PERIODS MASSIVE ARMS SUPPLIES, TO ISRAEL--THIS (ASSERTION) NOW CONTAINS A DEVIATION OF PRINCIPLE, THE U.S. THUS HAVING BECOME PARTY TO AND PART OF THE FACTORS ACCELERATING THE ARMS RACE. HENCE, ISRAEL'S POSITION IS CLEAR: OPPOSITION TO THIS DEAL AND TO OTHERS WHICH THE PRECEDENT OF THIS DEAL WOULD MAKE POSSIBLE.

13. ISRAELI ACTIVITY IS DIRECTED TOWARDS CLARIFYING TO THE
U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE, AS I HAVE DESCR
IBED IT
HERE, OF THIS DECISION--IF IT IS REALIZED--AND TO DO
EVERYTHING FOR ITS PREVENTION. THE DEBATE WITH THE U.S. IS A
BITTER ONE. IT IS A BITTER DEBATE BECAUSE THE SUBJECT IS ONE OF
VITAL SIGNIFICANCE AND PRINCIPLE FOR ISRAEL. IT IS A BITTER
DEBATE BECAUSE IT IS (BEING CONDUCTED) WITH THE ADMINISTRATION
OF THE FRIENDLIEST COUNTRY ISRAEL HAS IN THE WORLD.

14. I MOVE THAT THE SUBJECT BE REFERRED FRO DISCUSSION IN THE
DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.

15. THE PREMIER'S MOTION WAS CARRIED. END TEXT.
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